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SUBJECT: BOKOVA WINS JOB AS UNESCO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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11. (SBU) Summary: Bulgaria's Irina Bokova defeated Egyptian Farouk Hosni to become UNESCO's first woman Director-General in a 31-27 vote in the final round of voting held on September 22. The defeat was a major shock to Egypt, given President Mubarak's personal efforts to ensure a Hosni victory. Bokova's election must be confirmed at UNESCO's General Conference next month before she takes over from Japan's Koichiro Matsuura to lead the Organization on November 15. End Summary.

BOKOVA'S SURPRISE WIN

12. (SBU) With a tie vote 29-29 the day before, tensions were high and hopes to defeat Hosni were flagging as delegates went into the fifth and final round of voting. Given the secret ballot, efforts to determine who was voting for whom were difficult, if not impossible. Ina Marciulionyte, the Lithuanian candidate who had dropped out of the D-G race earlier, said that at least eight delegates had assured her that she had received their votes, yet she only received four votes when the ballots were counted. Other countries, attempting to save diplomatic face, played both sides, literally keeping at arms' length from anti-Hosni forces in public, promising their votes to Egypt, but secretly assuring the U.S. that their votes would go to Bokova.

EGYPT TAKEN BY SURPRISE

13. (SBU) Before the vote, Egypt's Ambassador to France, Kamal Hassan, assured the U.S. Representative that Egypt would be magnanimous in victory and would seek to include the U.S. in the administration of UNESCO. The final result must have been a shock, yet immediately following the vote, the Egyptian ambassador, Shadia Kenawy, warmly congratulated Bokova, following Bokova's gracious acknowledgement of Hosni's efforts during what had turned into a bitter campaign.

HARD BALL TACTICS UNDERMINED EGYPT

14. (SBU) The Egyptians had been campaigning hard for months at the highest levels, with Egypt's President Mubarak personally contacting his counterparts, urging them to support Hosni. Over the past year and half, Hosni had travelled extensively, meeting world leaders and managing to get the support of the Arab League, the African Union and the Islamic Conference, despite some questionable tactics. Several delegates were threatened that Egypt would insist to their capitals that they be recalled or that others be sent to cast ballots if they refused to vote for Hosni. It has been noted in the press that Madagascar, Nigeria, Pakistan and Lebanon all withdrew their representatives prior to the final vote, possibly under Egyptian pressure. Egypt also spent freely, hiring French and Senegalese public relations firms to UNESCO to lobby delegates.

ALLEGATIONS OF BRIBERY

15. (SBU) In this regard, Egypt may have overplayed its hand as allegations of bribes offered to various delegations surfaced in the days before the elections. One member of the U.S. delegation witnessed an unfamiliar man carrying a large amount of cash in an envelope at UNESCO headquarters. Several Member States complained to the Director-General and to the Executive Board Chairman about an atmosphere of intimidation at UNESCO and not feeling comfortable talking to their colleagues without outside lobbyists immediately questioning them in the corridors at UNESCO. Elizabeth Longworth (protect), Matsuura's Chief of Staff, confirmed to the U.S. Representative that on September 21, the D-G banned an individual from further entry to UNESCO because of numerous allegations of unethical conduct by the individual related to the election.

NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE DIDN'T WORK

16. (SBU) The other key players in the pro-Hosni forces were Brazil and India, which attempted, unsuccessfully, to paint the race as a North-South struggle. The Indian ambassador to UNESCO, Bhaswati Mukherjee, an increasingly divisive figure in the Organization, made no secret of Hosni's alleged offer to her to become Deputy Director-General should he win. Mukherjee's aggressive and abrasive style, which she demonstrated the morning of the final vote against Jamaica during a debate on climate change, apparently back-fired when Fiji dropped its support of Hosni in anger out of the lack of respect shown to a fellow small island developing state.

ROLE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

17. (SBU) While it would be easy for Egypt to blame the U.S. for its defeat, some of the key people responsible for turning around the vote were from small island states, including Jamaica and, in particular, the delegate from St. Lucia. An expatriate Lebanese diplomat with more than ten years at UNESCO, Ms. Lacoeyuilhe made an enormous contribution to Bokova's victory, after having been

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enlisted to assist with the campaign of Ivonne Baki. Following Baki's withdrawal from the race, Ms. Lacoeyuilhe worked until the last minute, and is responsible for having shifted key votes, including St. Vincent and Jamaica, to Bokova. With the exception of Cuba, we believe that all Caribbean states voted for Bokova. Portugal's Deputy Permanent Representative Antonio Cotrim also played an important role in stopping Hosni from winning the election.

AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA DIVIDED, ASIA UNKNOWN

18. (SBU) Within Africa, we believe that South Africa, Ethiopia, Benin, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia did not vote for Hosni. In Latin America, despite Brazil's best efforts, only Chile and possibly El Salvador voted for Hosni. In Asia, several Muslim countries were clearly in the Hosni camp. However, just before the final vote, China signaled to the U.S. Representative that, wary of the combined influence of India in a Hosni administration, it decided to vote for Bokova. (Note: The Chinese ambassador was jubilant after the result and said to the U.S. Representative that "this victory represented a successful partnership between the United States and China in support of good governance in the international system. In the first rounds we voted in support of geo-political obligations. In the final round, we voted in support of the integrity of this Organization." End note.)

POSSIBLE TROUBLE AHEAD ?

19. (SBU) With Bokova's election by UNESCO's 58-member Executive Board, her name now goes forward to UNESCO's General Conference, which begins meeting in early October. The full General Conference, all 193 Member States, will then confirm the election with an "up or down" vote. If the General Conference were to reject Bokova, the Executive Board would have to reconvene and select a new candidate within 24 hours. Given the Board's definitive rejection of Hosni, it is highly improbable that he would be nominated again.

BOKOVA BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

¶10. (U) Age 57. Born in Sofia on July 12, 1952, Irina Gueorguieva Bokova is the Ambassador of Bulgaria to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO since 2005. A career diplomat, she studied at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and at the School of Public Affairs of the University of Maryland (USA). Her fields of interest include European integration issues and women's equality. From 1982-84, she worked on political and judicial affairs at Bulgaria's U.N Mission in New York. She served as Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs (1995-97), and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996-97). In 1996, she made an unsuccessful attempt to become Vice President of Bulgaria. She advocated her country's membership in NATO and the European Union. Bokova's father, Georgi Bokov, was part of the inner circle of the former Soviet bloc nation's Communist Party leadership for several years. He was also editor-in-chief of the main party newspaper, Rabotnichesko Delo. Her brother, Filip Bokov, is also a diplomat. He had been a political advisor to current President Georgi Parvanov and former Socialist Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev. Last year he was appointed as Bulgaria's ambassador to Slovenia. Bokova is fluent in English, Russian, Spanish and French. Her children are currently studying and living in the U.S. (sources: UNESCO and press articles).
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